

In Minsk, the capital of Belarus, the authorities last week detained 50 opposition protesters who had gathered for the 85th anniversary of the declaration of the short-lived Belarusian Democratic Republic. On Thursday, demonstrators supporting the Iraq war—which President Aleksandr Lukashenko opposes—were arrested. It seems clear that Mr. Lukashenko, Europe's sole remaining dictator, is intent on tightening his grip on Belarus.

Sadly, Zimbabwe, Cuba and Belarus are not alone. Other countries have used the Iraq war to step up human rights abuses. Vietnam's most renowned dissident, Nguyen Dan Que, 1 60-year-old writer who is a physician by training, was arrested late last month. Hardly anyone protested. In Egypt, hundreds of war protesters were detained, with dozens beaten and tortured. In Thailand, the government has justified what appear to be summary executions in the name of a war on drugs. At least 1,900 people have been killed, including innocent bystanders. These crack-downs, too, all passed with little notice or comment.

That dictators move in times of world crisis comes as no surprise. The Soviets crushed the Hungarian revolution in 1956 during the Suez crisis. In 1968, when the Johnson administration was preoccupied with Vietnam, and Germany and France as well as the United States were convulsed in antiwar demonstrations, the Soviets moved into Czechoslovakia.

In January 1991, just as today, the international community was focused on a war in Iraq. As the Persian Gulf war was starting, the Soviet Army took advantage of the internal community's inattention to crack down on an independence movement in Lithuania. More than 200 people were wounded and 15 killed as Moscow seized control of the television broadcast center in Vilnius.

If we let tyrants escape the international condemnation that is often the only way to protect their critics against abuses, the brutal campaigns in Zimbabwe, the clean sweep of dissidents in Cuba, and the arrests of demonstrators in Belarus may have to be added to the list of unintended consequences of the war in Iraq.

BURMA

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, in May 2002, the Shan Women's Action Network and the Shan Human Rights Foundation issued a highly disturbing report entitled *License to Rape*. The State Department followed that report with further investigation into the issue.

I traveled to the Thai-Burma border in January of this year and heard further horrifying testimonies about Burmese military regime's use of systematic rape against ethnic minorities. In addition, refugees and others shared personal experiences about watching the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) soldiers kill their families or neighbors in front of them. One eight-year-old orphan I met saw both parents brutally murdered while he watched. Other refugees reported the SPDC's use of ethnic minorities, including women and young children, as human land-mine sweepers and as forced labor.

These human rights abuses MUST be stopped.

To add further proof to the myriad reliable reports by both local and international non-

governmental organizations (NGOs), Refugees International recently released a report further documenting the SPDC military's use of rape as a weapon of war against ethnic women. The new report is entitled *No Safe Place: Burma's Army and the Rape of Ethnic Women*. *No Safe Place* documents the SPDC's use of rape against women from the Karen, Karenni, Mon, Tavoyan and Shan ethnic groups and indicates that the rapes are "a pattern of brutal abuse designed to control, terrorize, and harm ethnic nationality populations through their women."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter a portion of Refugees International's report into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

Thank you.

NO SAFE PLACE: BURMA'S ARMY AND THE RAPE OF ETHNIC WOMEN

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

Refugees International recommends that:

The United Nations

The UN Commission on Human Rights condemn rape and other forms of sexual violence against ethnic women and girls by Burma's military in its annual resolution on the situation of human rights in Burma.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ensure that any investigation of rape and other forms of sexual violence inside Burma conducted by UN officials is done by experts on sexual violence, with guarantees of full access, complete and ongoing security for all witnesses and victims and a follow up mechanism to verify compliance.

UNHCR assist the Royal Thai Government in providing a safe environment for Burmese fleeing human rights abuses with a special emphasis on women and children.

The UNHCR insist that women and girls fleeing rape and other forms of sexual violence in Burma qualify for protection and assistance in Thailand.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women request a special periodic report from the State Peace and Development Council focusing on the constitutional, legal, administrative, military, and practical measures taken to eliminate rape and other forms of violence against women. The Committee should convene a special session to engage in dialogue with the SPDC about this special periodic report.

The Royal Thai Government (RTG)

The RTG recognize women and girls fleeing rape in Burma who seek refuge in Thailand as legitimate refugees who have a right to protection and assistance, and not as "illegal migrants."

The RTG ensure that Burmese survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence in Thailand, whether in camps or working as "migrants," receive critical physical and mental health services, especially focused on gender-based abuses.

The RTG cease the practice of repatriating or deporting asylum seekers without prior screening to ascertain whether they have valid claims for asylum.

The RTG adhere to the definition of "refugee" according to the 1951 Convention on the Status relating to Refugees and the 1967 protocol—a definition that has attained the level of customary international law—and should not create a new standard for determining when those seeking refuge are entitled to enter its borders.

The State Peace and Development Council

The SPDC stop all military buildup and begin demilitarizing the ethnic areas promptly.

The SPDC fulfill its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

of Discrimination Against Women (CEDWA), which it ratified in 1998. This includes ceasing all practices and policies which discriminate against women, including violence against women.

The SPDC ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

The SPDC fulfill its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it ratified in 1991, which prohibits gender-based violence against children.

Governments

Governments demand that the SPDC demilitarize ethnic areas.

Governments maintain economic sanctions and withhold overseas development and loan or debt assistance until significant improvements in the human rights situation, including a decrease in violence against women, is independently verified.

Governments continue to pressure the SPDC to engage in meaningful, substantive discussions with the National League of Democracy and representatives of ethnic nationalities.

NGOs and International Organizations

Organizations lend support to the international campaign to stop rape and other forms of sexual violence by the Burmese military through public statements and advocacy.

International organizations conducting research on rape, other forms of sexual violence and other human rights abuses coordinate with grassroots, indigenous organizations to ensure the comprehensive and safe collection of information.

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) seek to build the capacity of indigenous groups to document abuses perpetrated against their own communities.

Organizations increase efforts to reach and assist displaced populations with critical needs.

III. INTRODUCTION

"I have waited many years to tell you this story," one Karenni woman lamented as she told of witnessing her thirteen-year-old sister's rape and then described how the Burmese soldiers beat and attempted to rape her. She is just one of countless women from Burma's ethnic minority groups, sometimes known as ethnic nationalities, with a chilling tale of abuse at the hands of her country's army.

In June 2002, the Shan Human Rights Foundation and Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) released a report, *License to Rape*, documenting 625 cases of rape and sexual violence. The report began a movement to focus on Burma's use of rape as a weapon of war, while also highlighting the relentless, ongoing campaign of human rights abuses against Burma's ethnic minorities. Based on interviews conducted by indigenous women's and human rights groups, and compiled and written by indigenous women, *License to Rape* provided credible proof of the brutality of the Burmese army, in the voices of those very women affected most by the brutalities.

Following the release of this important report, the international community expressed unprecedented but long overdue outrage. The U.S. State Department declared its indignation at the phenomenon documented in the report and called for an international investigation, while sending its own investigator to the Thai/Burmese border; members of the U.S. Congress and officials from other governments publicly condemned the Burmese military's actions. Pressure for the United Nations to investigate the prevalence and systematic nature of the rapes grew until the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma raised the issue with Burma's military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Various governmental

officials, NGOs, and UN personnel began talking about the possibility and logistics of an independent investigation. Meanwhile, in Thailand, the Royal Thai Government (RTG), concerned that such an outcry would jeopardize its policy of engagement with the SPDC, ordered those NGOs that participated in compiling the report to close their offices indefinitely.

Although License to Rape has received a notable amount of attention, the international community, including officials from various governments, suggested to Refugees International that additional evidence could assist in generating further action. It is important to ask why. Some suggested that a report about the experience of indigenous women, compiled by indigenous women, could not be objective. Others proposed that the report, written by a small, unknown group, was not credible enough.

The authors of this report reject those propositions. Few are as well-qualified to document and describe rape as those women from the brutalized communities. International advocacy without grassroots knowledge, participation, and decision-making is of extremely limited use. Consequently, the purpose of this report is not to "bolster" the claims contained in License to Rape. Rather, the purpose is both to support and build on the movement and activity generated by SWAN, and to expand the scope of understanding regarding the brutal phenomenon of rape in Burma to include a broader profile of ethnic nationalities. License to Rape documented the widespread use of rape against Shan ethnic women. Rape is not confined to Shan State or to Shan women. The Burmese military uses rape against many ethnic nationalities for the express purpose of brutalizing "insurgents," quashing ethnic dissent, and demoralizing and destroying ethnic communities.

Refugees International decided that our approach would be to broaden the scope of the Shan report by investigating the prevalence of the Burmese military's use of rape against other ethnic groups. RI's field mission focused the research on the Karen, Karenni, Mon, and Tavoyan ethnic groups. In applying our expertise in international advocacy on behalf of war-affected populations, RI sought to examine the extent of the use of rape against a variety of Burma's ethnic nationalities and determine if the abuses were widespread and/or systematic.

Karen, Karenni, Mon and Tavoyan women and men, as well as several Shan individuals, were courageous in sharing their personal stories and observations. From the 26 individuals interviewed, 43 rapes or attempted rapes were described, 23 of them confirmed by victim or witness testimony or physical evidence. Stories of rapes and other human rights abuses and the resulting mental and physical ailments dominated the interviews. Individuals still in pain from torture and beatings talked about the violations suffered by them and their families and friends. For many, the decision to leave Burma was clearly tied to the rape and other abuses they and their family members had experienced. One survivor spoke for many when she said, "To this day, I cannot sleep at night thinking about what happened." The time is ripe for the international community to hear their voices and take action.

SAN BENITO MARINE PFC. JUAN GARZA

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a fallen soldier who grew up in San Benito, Texas: Marine PFC Juan Garza, who we learned yesterday was killed in action by sniper fire as his unit was taking and holding the Baghdad airport.

The price we are paying as a Nation is high in terms of loss of life in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Already, sons of South Texas have been killed and wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, with another still unaccounted for in the Iraqi theatre. PFC Garza was the most recent loss for our community.

Garza, who served with the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines Regiment, was killed Monday evening by enemy sniper fire while patrolling the Baghdad airport just outside the Iraqi Capital. His mother said he was shot in the chest and died instantly. PFC Garza was based at Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he was an expert marksman and broke shooting range records there in boot camp.

PFC Garza was always a sportsman, competing in football and track. His friends and family remember him for his humor and his target practice. He always aspired to be in the military, and probably got the bug for service from watching the military movies he loved. He was also inspired to join the service by his grandfather, who served in the United States Army.

He grew up in San Benito, but moved to Michigan to live with his aunt and uncle. After graduating from Summerfield High School in Temperance, Mich., Garza enlisted in the Marines and was stationed at Camp Pendleton.

He loved his country and he loved the Marines. Like most people who join the service, he wanted to help people, to make the world a better place. The world is lonelier today without Juan in it, but the work he did will indeed make it a better place.

On the day after Christmas, 2002, he married his sweetheart, and was deployed to the Middle East the next day. This was a tragedy on so many levels. PFC Garza is survived by his young wife, Casey; his parents, Mary Ann and Juan Guadalupe Garza; his baby half-sister, Stephanie Rae Castillo; and his aunt, Jodi Bucher of Temperance, with whom he lived in Michigan.

I ask my colleagues to remember Juan Garza's family today, to pray for them as they absorb this enormous personal loss. I also ask that we all continue to pray for the safety of the men and women we have sent to do this dirty, difficult task of ridding Iraq of dangerous weapons of mass destruction.

ADDRESS OF DEMOCRATIC LEADER NANCY PELOSI TO THE AMERICAN ISRAEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to call the attention of my colleagues to an excel-

lent speech given a few days ago by Democratic Leader NANCY PELOSI, my colleague, friend and neighbor in California. Her address was given at the recent Conference here in Washington of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, an organization of Americans who see strong American ties with the State of Israel is a vital element in our nation's vital interest.

Mr. Speaker, Leader PELOSI's position on terrorism was clear and unequivocal: "There is no place in the civilized world for terrorism. Not now. Not ever. . . . No injustice, real or imagined, can ever justify, and no future can ever be built upon, the calculated slaughter of innocents." She was emphatic: "The world must never accept in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, or Haifa what the world would not tolerate in London, Washington, New York, or San Francisco." These words must be the basis of our country's efforts to bring peace to the Middle East.

Congresswoman PELOSI understands that peace cannot come through "lowering the threshold for the cessation of violence" and any roadmap for peace in the region must, in her words "be based on real change on the ground, not artificial dates on the calendar."

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to read Congresswoman PELOSI's excellent address.

ADDRESS OF DEMOCRATIC LEADER NANCY PELOSI TO THE AMERICAN ISRAEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Good morning. My, how this group has grown. Congratulations.

Cissie Swig, thank you so much, first for that warm introduction, but more importantly for your friendship and your mentioning of me over the years and for your leadership on so many issues. I cherish our friendship.

President Amy Friedkin, a dear friend for so many years. It has been wonderful to see Amy rise within your great organization, from the East Bay Federation and the Northern California chapter of AIPAC, all the way to become the national President.

I am thrilled that Amy is the first woman to be President of AIPAC. And with president-elect Bernice Manocherian, perhaps it is the beginning of a wonderful trend. I commend AIPAC for breaking down another barrier and leading America closer to the ideal of equality that is both our heritage and our hope.

Cissie and Amy will appreciate this story. My daughter is Catholic. My son-law is Jewish. Last week, I celebrated my birthday, and my grandchildren—ages four and six—called me to sing Happy Birthday. And the surprise, the real gift, was that they sang it in Hebrew.

I'm so pleased to be joined by three of my colleagues—Congressman Howard Berman of California, Congressman Sander Levin of Michigan, and Congressman Bob Matsui of California. All are strong supporters of Israel. Thank you to all the members of AIPAC, especially those who have traveled so far from California and the Bay Area. The special relationship between the United States and Israel is as strong as it is because of your fidelity to that partnership and the commitment of every person in this room today.

I am honored to be here to speak about something that can never be said enough: America's commitment to the safety and security of the State of Israel is unwavering.

Today, the thoughts and prayers of all Americans are with our courageous forces in Iraq. Americans may have had our differences going into this war, but we are